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21 March 2013

Mr James Stewart  
Interim principal  
Cowes Enterprise College  
Crossfield Avenue  
Cowes  
Isle of Wight  
PO31 8HB

Dear Mr Stewart

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Cowes Enterprise College**

Following my visit to your college on Wednesday 20 March 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the college's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the college became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2012.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim principal, senior leaders, members of the governing body and Cowes Pathfinder Trust, representatives of the local authority and an external school improvement adviser employed to work with the leadership team. The local authority's statement of action, the college's improvement plan and documents used by leaders to monitor the college's work were evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection the principal has resigned from the college. A member of the college's senior leadership team is currently leading the college in the role of

interim principal. He is being supported by an experienced National Leader of Education. An interim executive principal has been appointed and will join the college in April 2013. One governor has left the governing body and a parent governor has been appointed. One teaching staff member has left the college and two new staff have joined the college. A decision has been taken that the college will not move into its new building this academic year.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

The governing body and Cowes Pathfinder Trust are working closely together to improve the college. They moved promptly to arrange interim leadership of the college following the resignation of the college's principal and have commissioned effective senior leadership support from an experienced National Leader of Education. The interim principal is providing clear, positive leadership; however, the small senior leadership team has lacked sufficient capacity to drive rapid improvement since the previous inspection and this has impacted on the progress made.

The local authority and college leaders have liaised closely over the creation of the local authority's statement of action and the college's improvement plan. This has ensured the plans complement each other and that appropriate actions to set the college on the path to improvement have been identified. The local authority's statement of action identifies the support required by the college and this is being provided by an external school improvement service. For example, support is being provided for teaching and learning, the curriculum and leadership and management.

College leaders accept that the timescales set for some of the proposed actions in their improvement plan are too rushed and this could limit the impact of these actions. These timescales are to be revised in order to ensure that all actions are taken in a timely, effective way so that they have maximum impact. The plan contains clear and measurable check point targets against which the impact of actions taken can be measured. The governing body and trust members are aware of the college's weaknesses and what needs to be done to improve the college. Clear plans are in place for governors, trust members and the local authority to evaluate the impact of actions taken.

The interim principal and senior leaders have rightly concentrated their efforts on improving teaching and students' achievement. A new assessment and feedback guidance policy has been introduced, and regular monitoring is being used to identify appropriate training and support for staff. However, the college's monitoring data indicates that still more needs to be done to eradicate inadequate teaching. Some initial, sensible changes have been made to the curriculum in order to reduce

'Learning Village Time' and provide more time for academic subjects. Further changes to the curriculum are being planned for September 2013. Since the previous inspection, communication with parents and carers has been improved. A weekly newsletter is now published and a parents' council has been established.

There remains some uncertainty as to when the college will move into its new building and it is important that this does not distract college leaders and governors from working to rapidly improve teaching and students' achievement.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose.

The college's improvement action plan is fit for purpose.

The college may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for the Isle of Wight. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sanderson

**Her Majesty's Inspector**